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SUBJECT: Argentine National Prayer Breakfast

¶1. (U) Argentina's small but growing Evangelical community held its annual prayer breakfast on November 27 with the participation of Argentine Vice President Julio Cobos and four national deputies of the center-right PRO party, led by Buenos Aires mayor Mauricio Macri, and a range of civic leaders. The breakfast, attended by 300 (including the Ambassador), was marked by calls for renewal of values, tolerance, and the importance of individual integrity. International participants included Bolivian Senator Roger Pinto Molina, who called for forgiveness, tolerance of different points of view and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Argentina's evangelical community has strong ties to the United States, and its small but talented group of representatives in the Chambers of Deputies share positive views of the U.S. and a conviction about the need for Argentina to improve the integrity of its political system.

¶2. (U) The Prayer Breakfast brought together about 300, well-to-do members of Argentina's growing evangelical community and others who share the vision of cleaner, more honest government. This seventeenth annual Prayer Breakfast was organized and led by Congresswoman Cynthia Hotton, an Argentine diplomat and member of the center-right Republican Proposal (PRO) Party party of Buenos Aires Mayor Mauricio Macri. Modeled on the event held annually in Washington D.C., the breakfast features prayers for the future of Argentina and its leaders, and is open to all denominations. A rabbi participated in the presentations, as did pastors from several denominations and representatives of well-respected NGOs Conciencia and CIPPEC. True to its promise, the breakfast was filled with inspiring talks and prayers for Argentina's leaders, including President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, who is a political opponent of the vast majority of those present.

¶3. (SBU) Vice President Julio Cobos, who is alienated from President Kirchner and her allies because of his vote against the government's proposed tax on farmer exports, gave the keynote speech. He stressed the importance of Argentina restoring respect for values: keeping one's word, honesty, mutual respect, tolerance for different points of view, and freedom of thought and speech. He was very warmly received.

¶4. (SBU) Bolivian Senate leader H. Roger Pinto Molina was the primary international guest speaker. He quoted from the New Testament in calling for forgiveness, tolerance, and peaceful reconciliation of political differences. In private conversation with the Ambassador, the Senator lamented the expulsion of his friend, Ambassador Phil Goldberg, from Bolivia and President Morales's decision to expel the DEA from Bolivia. He said this was the price Morales had to pay to the cocaleros who supported his election, and that the moves were all part of Morales' effort to try to create enemies around which to rally political support.

¶5. (U) The overriding message from the speakers was the importance of renewal and individual commitment to bringing about change in the practices and morals of Argentina: each person can make a difference, even if supporters of a more ethically upright Argentina seem to be few in number.

¶6. (U) Argentina's evangelical community continues to grow. It has held rallies attracting more than a hundred thousand in Buenos Aires

in the past year to hear popular visiting pastors. Southern California pastor Rick Warren held a well-highly attended set of talks here several months ago, for example, and many local pastors and churches have ties to fellow believers in the U.S. This community seems to have a good representation in the center-right PRO party. Four of its nine Congressional members attended the breakfast and one of them, Eugenio Burzaco, leads a regular prayer group in Argentina's Congress.

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